

5,935

Front Page
 Edit Page
 Other Page

Senator Gale McGee's Senate Summary

vided to the reputation of our country for a positive and constructive program for peace.

A second is the inclination to vote more and more military funds in the expectation that we will thus be correcting what went wrong. The harsh truth is that this may only aggravate the present world-wide condition of unrest and anti-Americanism. Nowhere around the globe can it be said that the U.S.A. has failed to project its military image. But there is real reason to believe that we have failed to project a more positive national image. That is, in our own hemisphere, in Africa, and in Asia offer dramatic testimony. What we are against has been made abundantly clear; but what we are for has not gotten through.

Time passes America for a larger role in the world. The effect of the impulse to increase military appropriations is to take funds away from the non-military. While we cannot afford to slip back militarily, neither can we afford to neglect the other, more constructive side of the American image.

By way of a postscript to the discussions at the Bilderberg Conference, let it be noted that the international position of the United States has further deteriorated—dangerously so. In a matter of weeks American prestige has suffered a succession of body blows.

To the bombing of U-2; the Paris fiasco; and the withdrawal by the Kremlin of the invitation to President Eisenhower to visit the Soviet Union, has now been added the humiliating withdrawal of a similar Japanese invitation. Hostile mobs commenting the President in Oklahoma and a removal by Communist China of bombards of Quemoy and Matsu, deliberately timed to further embarrass our President.

That there will be still more incidents is a realistic prospect. Nor is there any reason to believe that the approaching Democratic and Republican Conventions may cause the Communists to suspend similar psychological attacks just for the month of July. This fact thrusts to the fore the question of whether the Congress dare be away from Washington even long enough to nominate Presidential favorites in July. If the world situation has slipped as badly as recent crises suggest, it is doubtful wisdom for the U. S. Senate at least to subordinate the nation's foreign policy crisis to previous calendar commitments in Los Angeles and Chicago.

Without any question, greater unity—at home and abroad—has resulted from the incidents. But the harsh fact remains that we now stand united on a far lower level than we had a right to expect or to hope for had the U-2 affair not triggered the succession of incidents we have just experienced.

This brings us then back home where we in America have to decide for ourselves how important it is in a democracy to encourage constructive criticism rather than the

is unfortunate that the U-2 incident and the others occurred in a Presidential election year. Criticism is now too often dismissed as being political when in all truth something basically went wrong in a most vital segment of our national security set-up. For this reason, it is imperative that Republicans and Democrats alike unite as Americans in support of a sober, intelligent, objective assessment of this whole episode in the expectation that the next President, whomever he may be and from whichever party, may learn the lessons that desperately must be learned if we are to meet the risks of world leadership successfully.

To err is human, but to err repeatedly may no longer be one of our permissible luxuries. As one of the great statesmen of Europe put it, "You in America are on the spot. We all make mistakes," he said, "but your mistakes carry a special weight because of the gigantic role you play in the world. If my country makes a mistake, it matters very little to the rest of mankind. But you in America are like Atlas with the world on your shoulders. When you stumble, the whole world falls with you."

WYOMINGITES:

During the Memorial Day recess of the Senate, I was privileged to attend the Bilderberg Conference in Burgenstock, Switzerland. Along with my government colleagues, Sen. Hugh Scott (R-Pa.), and I were the members of the Senate attending. Members of the parliaments of the other NATO countries of Western Europe, diplomats, and leaders of business and industry were present. Presiding over the series of meetings was H.K.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. To assure frank and uninhibited discussion, the meetings were closed to the press, all comments were off the record, and no conclusions were formalized. The transportation costs, moreover, were paid by a private foundation rather than by the taxpayer. It was felt that only in these ways could men high in the governments of the world be encouraged to speak bluntly on the issues of the day.

Coming as it did in the wake of the collapse of the Paris Summit meeting, our deliberations in Switzerland became, in fact, a sort of "pick-up-the-pieces" conference. While there were no group conclusions, it is permissible to share here some of the individual and personal observations picked up in private conversations with persons from ten or a dozen governments of the world.

Almost without exception there was agreement that the United States had stumbled badly in the early phases of the U-2 incident. Criticism of our handling of the U-2 seemed to center around three aspects: (1) The timing of the flight itself, (2) The President's decision to take full personal responsibility, and (3) The handling of the news release of the incident by Washington.

Mindful of the fact that the U-2 may have been deeply resented by intelligence reasons for the U-2 flight as near the summit Conference as the fatal flight of Pilot Powers was, the thought prevailed, nonetheless, that the timing was unfortunate. It may even have been an unnecessary risk to have taken.

In regard to the second aspect, it was pointed out that the President's personal assumption of responsibility more than any other factor developed the incident into the national crisis. The third point, the handling of the news release of the incident by Washington, was also a subject of discussion. It was felt that the President's handling of the incident was at best

but that the head of the state can never afford to be personally identified with it. The President's question of the legal and ethical position of his government at the same time that it placed us in a difficult position. For example, it will now be impossible for NATO countries of Western Europe, diplomats, and leaders of business and industry were present. Presiding over the series of meetings was H.K.H. Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. To assure frank and uninhibited discussion, the meetings were closed to the press, all comments were off the record, and no conclusions were formalized. The transportation costs, moreover, were paid by a private foundation rather than by the taxpayer. It was felt that only in these ways could men high in the governments of the world be encouraged to speak bluntly on the issues of the day.

And criticism regarding the handling of the news releases on the incident in Washington centered on the obvious ineptness of the bureaucrats in the Capitol. It was clearly a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. Quite obviously there was no one "missing the store" at this critical moment. The secretary of state, Mr. Herter, was in Turkey; the President was in Gettysburg; and in Washington there was a merry-go-round of conflicting statements coming out of the NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), the Department of State, and the White House.

What disturbed many of our friends was the thought that we in the United States were attempting to hide a clear-cut mistake behind a facade of unity. The fear was expressed also that we were dangerously exploiting the loyalty of our allies.

It is only fair to say, however, that while our friends and allies were "all shook up" over our fumbling, the incident did not destroy their basic confidence in our leadership. Their one desperate hope seemed to be, however, that somehow we in the United States might learn from this experience. As I urged upon several of our critics in the American system of government we are entitled to make mistakes; to do so is not fatal as it is in a dictatorship. But there is a corollary to that. We are also entitled to learn from those same mistakes.

The events preceding and following the U-2 spy incident brought into focus two serious consequences.

One is the freezing of the public mind in America. Because of the unfortunate turn of events, the candidates for President in both parties face the danger of being straight-jacketed by public opinion on matters affecting not only peace all around the